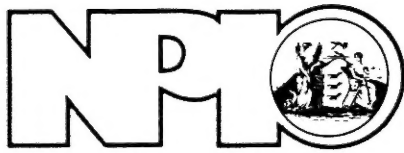


NEWARK
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OFFICE



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Press Release:

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For Immediate Release (After 10:30 a.m.)

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NEWARK MARKS 325TH BIRTHDAY

Newark, the nation's third oldest major city, marked the opening of festivities celebrating its 325th birthday today with the unveiling of a mural depicting the City's history.

The artwork, which was painted by students from the Newark School of Fine and Industrial Art, under the supervision of renowned muralist and teacher, Don Miller, was revealed during ceremonies in the Rotunda of City Hall. The mural highlights Newark's history by focusing on portraits of six personalities: Seth Boyden, inventor and manufacturer; William Wright, first mayor; Theodore Frelichuysen, senator and abolitionist; James Baxter, educator; John Cotton Dana, library and museum founder, and Marion Thompson Wright, historian.

Members of the City's 325th Anniversary Committee joined Mayor Sharpe James, City Council President Dr. Ralph T. Grant Jr. and other municipal officials in praising the mural and reflecting on Newark's long history.

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325TH BIRTHDAY Ad 1

James pointed out, "Throughout its history, New Jersey's largest city has endured many ups and downs, but even during its bleakest days, the spirit and optimism of its people always helped to hasten its recovery.

"Today, we witness renewed optimism and a major renaissance in our city; a renaissance of which we all are a part. And, while we celebrate the accomplishments of our past, we are poised on the doorsteps of the 21st century and look to our future with vision and hope for continued progress, growth and prosperity," James said.

The Council President noted, "From Newark's illustrious past as an industrial mecca and transportation core, we celebrate today its re-emergence to claim its place in the international marketplace of the 21st century. We celebrate too, its people, who share the same strength, determination and commitment as their forebears who settled here 325 years ago."

The Mayor said the mural, which illustrates the City's history through landscapes and portraits of famous Newarkers. "is an appropriate way to kick off our 325th anniversary."

According to James, "Arts and culture have always been a vital part of our City, and with the development of the \$200 million N.J. performing Arts Center, Newark will be a showcase for local, national and world talent.

"The artist who have painted this mural exemplify some of the most creative talent this city has to offer," he claimed.

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Miller noted the completion of the mural in the year when Newark is celebrating its 325th birthday is "a happy coincidence."

He said his students, whose ages range from 20 to 52, and he "were unaware of the historical significance to Newark of the year 1991.

"The painting of this mural provided eight students--all with different artistic interests--an opportunity to combine their talents to produce a unified work while educating the viewers about history. This project gave them a reason to research and develop art skills which hopefully will stimulate their career decisions," he explained.

The unveiling is the first in a series of major events planned for the remainder of the year. According to the historical records, Newark's actual founding date is May 17, 1666, and a host of activities is planned for Founders Weekend 1991, May 17-19.

On Friday, May 17, a pageant reenacting the City's founding will take place from 12 noon to 2 p.m. at the "founding site," Saybrook Place and McCarter Highway. James, Grant, members of the City Council and other "notable" Newarkers will play a prominent role in the production, according to A. Zachary Yamba, president of Essex County College, who heads up the pageant committee.

Later that afternoon, the Newark Public Library will hold a reception toasting the anniversary celebration.

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Saturday, May 18, a special jazz and gospel concert, "Newark Grooves, A Celebration of the Cities Music" will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Mary Burch Auditorium at Essex County College. A reception will precede the performance.

On Sunday, May 19, Old First Presbyterian Church, which was established at the City's founding, will be celebrating its 325th birthday. Dr. Dwight A. White, Pastor, will begin worship services at 11 a.m. At 3 p.m. a celebration will be held with Dr. Maurice Boyd, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, speaking.

Other major events will be held by community groups, the business community and the Anniversary Committee throughout the year, with a special program to close the celebration planned for late Fall.

For more information, please contact the Newark Public Information Office, Room 214 City Hall, 733-8004.

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